

COMPANY THEATRE PRESENTS
Blithe Spirit
 BY NOEL COWARD
 Directed by
Kathy Gent



15-29 November 1997
 Rose Centre, School Rd. Belmont
 Bookings Essential: 486 3835 / 445 9900

THE SETTING The action of the play takes place in the livingroom of Charles Condomine's house in Kent in the mid 1930's.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act 1
 Scene 1: Before dinner on a Summer evening.
 Scene 2: After dinner.

Act 2
 Scene 1: The next morning.

There will be one interval during which the Bar is open.

INTERVAL



Act 2
 Scene 2: Late the following afternoon.
 Scene 3: Early evening, a few days later.

Act 3:
 Scene 1: After dinner, a few days later.
 Scene 2: Several hours later.

**Noel Coward
 Playwright**

Sir Noel Pierce Coward (1899-1973) was the darling of the British Theatre in the 1930's and 1940's. Like Oscar Wilde, he was the master of witty repartee and his 'bons mots' delivered at a fast clip have become his trademark. Following early successes such as *The Vortex* and *Private Lives*, Coward wrote *Blithe Spirit* in five days in May 1941, following a tour of Australia and New Zealand. He billed the play as '*an improbable farce, sheer escapism for the people of war weary Britain*' and it quickly became one of the most loved and long running plays on the English stage, delighting the politicians and Royalty in whose circles Coward loved to mingle. In 1945 the film of *Blithe Spirit* was released starring Rex Harrison as Charles and Margaret Rutherford as Madame Arcati.

**Kathy Gent
 Director**

Kathy Gent has been in New Zealand for just two years, and is delighted to direct for Company this quintessentially English Comedy. She has directed a season of one act plays for Company and appeared as Lady Clementina in *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* and Mrs Drudge in *The Real Inspector Hound*. In the UK, she has enjoyed directing *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, *Rebecca*, *Cabaret*, *Stepping Out*, *When We Are Married*, *Charley's Aunt*, *Bedroom Farce*, *A Chorus of Disapproval* in addition to many pantomimes and revues.

**Commencing Saturday
November 15th, 1997.**

CAST
*(In Order of
Appearance)*

Edith (a maid).....Odette Penno
Ruth..... Dianne Barry
Charles.....Huntly Elliott
Doctor Bradman.....Gregg Wiggill
Mrs Bradman.....Lyndall Frost
Madame Arcati.....Dianne Lamont
Elvira.....Rebecca Houston

CREW

Director.....Kathy Gent
Production Manager.....Richard Parmee
Stage Manager.....Annie Gandar
Properties.....Maureen Kenny
Stage Design.....Anne Rimmer
Stage Painting.....Janet Macklin
Stage Sewing.....Moirra Coote
Publicity/Programme.....Sherry Ede
Poster Design.....Peter Dagg
Set Construction.....Tony Sandy/Malcolm Love
Assisted by.....Richard Johnson/ Steve Green
.....& Anthony Whitehouse
Costumes..... Cathie Sandy/Gail Carran/Sheri Suckling
Lighting Design.....Phil Searle
Lighting Operator.....Doug Annan
Follow Spot Operator.....Richard Parmee
Sound.....Sue Collins
Front of House.....Doug Bourke
Box Office.....Anthony Whitehouse
Bar.....Tony Sandy

Acknowledgements

Hyatt Regency Hotel
Caroline Ireland
Diane York
Diane Wallace
Janet Williams
Art Deco Society
Tom Smith



Biographies of The Cast (in order of appearance.)

Odette Penno (Edith)

Odette studied Theatre Studies at Auckland University, last year, majoring in film. She came to Auckland from Dunedin where she played The Rover in Aphra Behn's *The Rover* and Cecily in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Globe Theatre. She studied Speech and Drama to Grade 7 and won The Most Promising Competitor and The Open Shakespeare Section in Dunedin's Performing Arts Competition.

Dianne Barry (Ruth)

This is Dianne's first production with Company Theatre. She is returning to amateur theatre after a break of five years and is 'enjoying it immensely'. She has previously worked with United Players in Orewa, Peninsular Players in Whangaparaoa and was a founder member of Cornwall Players in One Tree Hill. She is an avid sailor and enjoys nothing more than sipping a glass of white wine on deck as she sails up the coast to the Bay of Islands.

Huntly Elliott (Charles)

Huntly's early work was with Dame Ngaio Marsh at the University of Canterbury (Henry IV in *King Henry IV Part 1* and Cassius in *Julius Caesar*.) He was involved in radio drama in the 60's and early 70's and toured England and Wales with Argyle Theatre for Youth. He was a co founder and director of Dunedin's Fortune Theatre Company where his roles included Middleton Murry in *The Two Tigers*, Martin Dysart in *Equus*, Macduff in *Macbeth*, George in *Fifty/Fifty*, his favourite role was Henry Carr in *Travesties*. Recent TV appearances include roles in *Xena* and *Hercules*, and also as Chairman of the Board, Bill Dimmock, in *Shortland Street*.

Gregg Wiggill (Dr Bradman)

Gregg is a South African born actor who has only recently arrived in New Zealand. He started drama at the age of 6 and has an ATCL Performers and Teacher's diploma from Trinity College, London. He has covered a wide spectrum in the entertaining industry, but having done television, radio and cabaret, stage remains his first love. Past productions include roles in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *the Wizard of Oz*, *Snow White* and the *Sound of Music*. Gregg also is an avid sports fan and has commentated cricket programmes on South African radio.

Lyndall Frost (Mrs Bradman)

Lyndall is a familiar face at Company Theatre and may be remembered as Truvy in *Steel Magnolias*, and Vera in *The Odd Couple*. Whilst Lyndall has enjoyed playing character parts in comedy, she would now like the challenge of a serious dramatic role. She is also a member of Arthro Theatre, performing at the Devonport Arts Festival in recent years and due to perform again in March 1998. In a recent visit to England she saw a production of *Blithe Spirit* at Bath Theatre Royal and has been perfecting Mrs Bradman's oh so very English accent ever since.

Dianne Lamont (Madame Arcati)

Dianne feels privileged this year to have played two of the classic roles for a woman 'of a certain age', as Lady Bracknell in The Pumphouse Winter Classic Production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and now Madame Arcati in Coward's *Blithe Spirit*. Dianne last appeared for Company as Lady Windemere in 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime'. Dianne acted professionally for many years and favourite roles included Amanda in Coward's *Private Lives*, St. Joan in Shaw's *St Joan*, and Maria in the first New Zealand production of *West Side Story*. A former radio broadcaster, she has also had TV roles in 'The Sound and the Silence' and 'True Life Stories'.

Rebecca Houston (Elvira)

This is Rebecca's first production with Company Theatre and she is enjoying it immensely. Though now living in Kohimarama, she grew up in Milford and appeared in about 25 productions with Milford Little Theatre, *Grease* with Musical Theatre Productions and *Frankenstein* with North Shore Operatic, also studying ballet for 8 years with Nathalie Dumbleton. She is currently attending drama classes with Raymond Hawthorne.



Gregg Wiggil, Dianne Lamont, Lyndall Frost